# THE RECOVERY KERNEL

## The Introduction Ritual

*The standing introduction format — used at every meeting, by every participant.*

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**Why This Replaces 'Hi, I'm Bob, I'm an Addict'**

The AA introduction does something important: it creates belonging through shared identity. When everyone in the room says 'I'm an addict,' no one is alone. The problem is that the identity it creates is defined entirely by deficit — by what you cannot control, what you have done wrong, what you are afflicted by. You say it at meeting one and you are still saying it at meeting five hundred. The sentence doesn't change. The identity doesn't move.

The Kernel introduction creates belonging through shared architecture instead. 'I'm a Warrior' or 'I'm a Worrier' or 'I'm MTHFR' are not deficit statements. They are biological reality statements. They say: here is how my system is wired, here is what it needs, here is what I am building toward. The identity is forward-facing from the first utterance.

The 'Thrills of Choice' element does something equally important: it normalizes the dopamine need rather than pathologizing it. Everyone in the room needs thrills. The question is not whether you need them — the question is which ones you're currently running on. Naming your modern thrills out loud, in front of the group, builds the neural association between your identity and those replacement behaviors. Every time you say 'my thrills of choice include rock climbing and espresso,' you are reinforcing that identity. That is not incidental. That is the mechanism.

The group responses are calibrated to the type — Warriors hear something that matches their energy; Worriers hear something that matches their need for calm acknowledgment. No one is spoken to the wrong way by a ritual designed for someone else.

**The Four Elements**

## What Every Introduction Contains

*Same structure, every meeting, every participant*

**The Introduction Template**

**"My name is [first name]."**

**"I am [Gene Type / Brain Type]."**

**"My Thrills of Choice include [modern thrills]."**
**"Right now I'm working on [one thing]."**

That is the complete introduction. Four sentences. Never more. The group responds after each one — the response is specific to the gene type, so the room learns to hear each other accurately.

**Element 1**

## Name

*Just the first name — nothing attached to it*

The name comes first and stands alone. No qualifiers. Not 'Hi I'm Bob and I've been clean for 47 days.' Not 'I'm Bob and I really struggled this week.' Just the name. The group's response is simple:

**PARTICIPANT: My name is [name].**
**GROUP: [Name]. Good to have you here.**

*[ The group says the person's name back to them. This is not incidental — hearing your name spoken by a group of people is neurologically grounding. It activates the same social recognition circuits that were hijacked by using. It is brief, warm, and non-pitying. ]*

**Element 2**

## Gene Type / Brain Type

*The identity anchor — biology, not pathology*

This is the line that does the heaviest lifting. The participant names their brain architecture. New participants who haven't been assessed yet have a default response (see below). The group's response is different depending on the type — Warriors hear activation energy; Worriers hear steadying calm.

**The Six Brain Types and Their Group Responses**

**PARTICIPANT: I am a Warrior. [ Val/Val — fast dopamine clearance, needs intensity ]**
**GROUP: Channel it. ⚡**

**PARTICIPANT: I am a Worrier. [ Met/Met — slow clearance, needs calm ]**
**GROUP: We've got you. 🤍**

**PARTICIPANT: I am a Warrior-Worrier. [ Val/Met — balanced, adaptive ]**
**GROUP: You've got range. ✦**

**PARTICIPANT: I am MTHFR. [ Methylation variant — depleted supply line ]**
**GROUP: We're rebuilding with you. □**

**PARTICIPANT: I am a Depleted Worrier. [ MTHFR + Met/Met — both systems compromised ]**
**GROUP: We go slow and we go together. □**

**PARTICIPANT: I am an Understimulated Warrior. [ MTHFR + Val/Val — depleted and fast-clearing ]**
**GROUP: We'll find you a real mountain. □**

**PARTICIPANT: I don't know my type yet. [ New participant, not yet assessed ]**
**GROUP: You will. We'll figure it out together.**

*[ The emoji symbols are for this document's clarity — you do not say them aloud. The energy behind them is what matters. Warriors need a response that matches their activation level. Worriers need a response that doesn't spike their cortisol. The room learns this naturally after a few meetings. ]*

*[ For new participants who don't know their type: this is not a barrier. 'I don't know my type yet' is a completely valid answer and gets a warm, welcoming response. The Phenotype Assessment (Protocol 06) is offered as a resource — never required. Most people self-identify as Warrior or Worrier within two or three meetings just from hearing others describe the types. ]*

**Element 3**

## Thrills of Choice

*The replacement behaviors — named out loud, every meeting*

The participant names the legal, safer alternatives to substances that currently give them a dopamine signal — or that they are building toward. These are the Modern Thrills: the activities that serve the same neurochemical function the substance was serving, without the debt.

The group's response to this element is always the same, regardless of type:

**PARTICIPANT: My Thrills of Choice include [list].**
**GROUP: That's the real thing.**

### The Philosophy of Modern Thrills

'Modern Thrills' is the Kernel's answer to the question AA never fully answers: what do you do with the dopamine need? AA's answer is essentially 'be of service, call your sponsor, go to meetings.' Those things are valuable — but they don't address the specific neurochemical hunger that drove the addiction. For a Warrior who was running on cocaine, 'be of service' does not replace the dopamine spike.

The Kernel says: name your biological need honestly, then find the modern thrill that meets it. For Warriors: intensity sports, competitive gaming, trading, extreme experiences, cold water, heavy lifting. For Worriers: rhythmic movement, creative precision work, music, cooking, deep reading. For MTHFR individuals: nature exposure, restorative movement, anything that generates more energy than it costs.

Naming them out loud in the introduction does three things: it builds the identity association between the person and the replacement behavior; it makes the group aware of what each person is running on, so support can be specific; and it normalizes the fact that everyone needs thrills — the difference is which ones you're using.

| Brain Type | Modern Thrills Menu — Examples to Draw From |
|---|---|
| Warrior (Val/Val) | CrossFit, powerlifting, martial arts, BJJ, sprinting, obstacle racing, competitive gaming, esports, trading, improv comedy, extreme sports, cold plunge, heavy music, poker, rock climbing, sparring |
| Worrier (Met/Met) | Long-distance running, yoga, swimming, cycling, pilates, rock climbing (technical), music practice, coding, cooking complex recipes, gardening, knitting/crochet, reading, puzzles, writing, nature walks |
| Warrior-Worrier (Val/Met) | Variable — often intensity sport plus creative outlet; running + music; lifting + cooking; competitive gaming + meditation |
| MTHFR (any COMT) | Forest walks (Shinrin-yoku), gentle cycling, swimming, stretching, restorative yoga, nature photography, slow cooking, journaling — anything energy-generating not energy-draining |
| Depleted Worrier | Walks, gentle yoga, music listening, slow creative work, animal interaction, simple gardening — focus on restoration before stimulation |
| Understimulated Warrior | Short intense bursts: 20-min HIIT, sprint intervals, heavy lifting — followed by 48-hour recovery; strategy games, competitive puzzles between sessions |
| Universal (all types) | Espresso/coffee (most common), live music, travel, cooking, cold water exposure, hiking, creative projects, volunteer work, time with animals, time with people who make you feel alive |

*[ Participants don't need to have their thrills fully figured out on day one. 'I'm still figuring out my thrills' is a valid answer. 'Coffee and long walks' is a valid answer. 'I used to love surfing and I'm trying to get back to it' is a valid answer. The facilitator affirms all of them with the same group response: 'That's the real thing.' ]*

**Element 4**

## What I'm Working On

*One thing — forward-facing, not backward-looking*

The fourth element is the one that moves. It changes meeting to meeting. It is one sentence about what the participant is actively working on in their recovery right now — not what went wrong, not what they're struggling with, but what they are building or addressing.

The group's response:

**PARTICIPANT: Right now I'm working on [one thing].**
**GROUP: We'll work on it with you.**

### The Difference Between 'What I'm Working On' and Testimony

AA testimony is backward-looking: what I did, what happened to me, how bad it got. It serves a genuine function — naming the damage, claiming the story, breaking the isolation of shame. But it can also trap people in the identity of their worst moments, and it requires literacy and verbal fluency that not everyone has.

'What I'm working on' is forward-looking. It does not require anyone to narrate their past. It does not require anyone to perform their suffering. It simply asks: what is the current project? That can be as small as 'sleeping before midnight' or as large as 'getting off benzos.' Both are equally valid. Neither is more impressive than the other.

The facilitator should be watchful for people who try to turn 'what I'm working on' into a testimony. Gently: 'Hold the story — we'll have space for that. Right now just: one thing you're working on.' The structure protects everyone, including the person who would otherwise spiral into shame.

**The Complete Ritual**

# In Sequence — Full Facilitator Script

*This replaces Phase 2 of the original meeting format*

### How It Flows

After the Opening (Purpose Statement, breath, water, opening sentence from the Kernel), the facilitator transitions directly into the Introduction Ritual. This replaces the old Check-In format entirely. The Introduction Ritual IS the check-in — it contains all the same information (who you are, how you're doing, what you need) but in a structured format that builds identity rather than documenting crisis.

**FACILITATOR: Now we introduce ourselves. Same format every meeting — four sentences. I'll go first.**

*[ [ Model the full introduction for the group. Use your own real type and real thrills. Never use a made-up example — authenticity is what makes the ritual work. ] ]*

**FACILITATOR: My name is [your name].**
**PARTICIPANT: My name is [name].**
**GROUP: [Name]. Good to have you here.**

**FACILITATOR: I am a [your type].**
*[ Facilitator says their own type. Group responds with the type-specific response. ]*

**FACILITATOR: My Thrills of Choice include [your real thrills].**
**PARTICIPANT: My Thrills of Choice include [list].**
**GROUP: That's the real thing.**

**FACILITATOR: Right now I'm working on [one real thing you're working on].**
**PARTICIPANT: Right now I'm working on [one thing].**
**GROUP: We'll work on it with you.**

**FACILITATOR: Now we go around the room. Take your time with each element. The group responds after each sentence — you'll hear how it works.**
*[ [ Go to the person to your left or right. Continue around the room. Hold time — each introduction should be under 60 seconds total. ] ]*

### Facilitator Notes — Handling New Participants

New participants who don't know their type yet:

- Before the meeting if possible: hand them the Type Card (see below) and let

them read the Warrior/Worrier descriptions. Many people self-identify immediately without any formal assessment.

- During the meeting: 'I don't know my type yet' is the valid response and gets its own group response: 'You will. We'll figure it out together.'
- After the meeting: offer the Phenotype Assessment (Protocol 06) as a resource. Never pressure. Most people have identified their type within 2–3 meetings just from hearing others.

New participants who don't have Modern Thrills yet:

- 'I'm still figuring out my thrills' → 'That's the real thing.' (The group affirms the search, not just the answer)
- 'I used to [X] before I started using' → That counts. Name it.
- 'Honestly just coffee right now' → That counts. Name it.
- The facilitator can gently offer: 'What did you love before the substance took over?' That question almost always surfaces something.

**Facilitator Notes — What to Do When It Goes Wrong**

- Someone gives a full testimony instead of four sentences: 'Hold that — I want to hear the whole thing, and we'll have space for it. Right now, just the four sentences. Name, type, thrills, what you're working on.'
- Someone says 'I'm an addict' as their type: 'That's the old introduction. Here we go with brain type — do you know if you're more Warrior or Worrier? If you're not sure yet, just say so.'
- Someone gets emotional during the introduction: let them. Don't rush. The group holds the silence. When they're ready, they continue or pass. No group response until they complete a sentence — then the group responds normally.
- Someone refuses to participate: 'Completely fine. You can observe tonight.' Do not pressure. Return at the end of the round and offer once more, gently.
- Someone gives a wildly long list of thrills: smile, let them finish, 'That's the real thing' — then privately, after the meeting: 'Great list. For the introduction, pick your top two or three so the pace stays consistent.'

**The Type Card**

# Print and Hand to New Participants

*One page — they read it before or during their first meeting*

This card is handed to anyone attending their first meeting. It gives them enough information to make their introduction — without requiring them to have read the book or attended a previous session.

## WHAT KIND OF BRAIN DO YOU HAVE?

*Read both descriptions. Check the one that fits — or the combination that fits.*

### ⚡ THE WARRIOR

*(Val/Val — fast clearance)*

You need intensity to feel alive.
Calm feels wrong or boring.
You do well under acute stress.
You may have used stimulants.
You need competition, novelty, stakes.

**Group response: "Channel it."**

### 🛡 THE WORRIER

*(Met/Met — slow clearance)*

Your brain runs hot under stress.
You think deeply but can get stuck.
You need calm to function well.
You may have used depressants.
You need rhythm, precision, safety.

**Group response: "We've got you."**

### 🧬 MTHFR

*(Methylation variant — depleted supply)*

Chronic low energy or flat mood.
Substances made you feel normal.
Antidepressants often didn't work.
You need restoration, not more output.

**Group response: "We're rebuilding with you."**

### ✦ NOT SURE YET

*(Still figuring it out)*

You don't need to know yet.
Just say: I don't know my type yet.
You'll recognize yourself in others.
Protocol 06 helps map it formally.

**Group response: "You will. We'll figure it out together."**

### The Introduction in Full — What It Sounds Like

**Example — Warrior, established recovery**

"My name is Marcus."
GROUP: "Marcus. Good to have you here."
"I am a Warrior."
GROUP: "Channel it."

"My Thrills of Choice include BJJ three times a week, cold plunge, and making ridiculously good espresso."
GROUP: "That's the real thing."
"Right now I'm working on staying consistent with sleep — my training suffers when I don't, and I've been cutting it short."
GROUP: "We'll work on it with you."

**Example — Worrier, newer to recovery**

"My name is Sofia."
GROUP: "Sofia. Good to have you here."
"I am a Worrier."
GROUP: "We've got you."
"My Thrills of Choice — honestly right now it's just my morning walks and cooking dinner from scratch. I'm trying to add swimming."
GROUP: "That's the real thing."
"Right now I'm working on not isolating when things get hard. I keep going quiet and I know it makes it worse."
GROUP: "We'll work on it with you."

**Example — MTHFR, first meeting**

"My name is Dev."
GROUP: "Dev. Good to have you here."
"I am — I think MTHFR? I read the card and that one sounded most like me. I always feel like I'm running on half a tank."
GROUP: "We're rebuilding with you."
"My Thrills of Choice — I used to love hiking before everything fell apart. Right now it's coffee and my dog."
GROUP: "That's the real thing."
"Right now I'm working on just getting through the week without using. That's honestly all I have right now."
GROUP: "We'll work on it with you."

**Example — Type unknown, first meeting, minimal words**

"My name is Lee."
GROUP: "Lee. Good to have you here."
"I don't know my type yet."
GROUP: "You will. We'll figure it out together."
"My Thrills... I don't know. Music, maybe."
GROUP: "That's the real thing."
"Right now I'm working on just showing up."
GROUP: "We'll work on it with you."

**Updated Meeting Flow**

# The Complete Format With Introduction Ritual Integrated

*Replace the original Phase 2 with this*

| Phase | What Happens | Time |
|---|---|---|
| PHASE 1 — OPENING | Water + breath + Purpose Statement (call-and-response) + one rotating sentence from the Kernel | ~8 min |
| PHASE 2 — INTRODUCTION RITUAL | Every participant: Name → Type → Thrills of Choice → What I'm working on. Group responds after each element. | ~15–20 min |
| PHASE 3 — PROTOCOL SESSION | One protocol, plain-language intro, guided exercise or discussion, brief reflection | ~25–30 min |
| PHASE 4 — THE CLOSE | Facilitator reflection + each person names one thing they'll do before next meeting + closing ritual | ~8–10 min |
| TOTAL | | ~60–70 min |

### The Logic of the Sequence

The meeting now has a coherent internal logic that mirrors the Kernel's therapeutic framework:

- Opening — grounds the body and states the purpose (you are not broken; you are here to understand your biology)
- Introduction Ritual — establishes identity through architecture, not deficit; names the replacement behaviors; names the current work
- Protocol Session — works the specific content that addresses the current need
- Close — anchors one concrete action and sends people out with the closing words they carry until next meeting

Every phase serves a different neurological function: opening activates the parasympathetic nervous system; introduction builds identity and social

connection; protocol session engages the prefrontal cortex in problem-solving; close activates dopamine through anticipation of the next concrete action.

The ritual is not decoration. It is the delivery mechanism.